

Argentina

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INR WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

OF DEVELOPMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS

No. 139, January 4, 1980

LATIN AMERICA

1979 Trends in Category One. In a brief review of trends in the Argentine government's 1979 performance with respect to category one human rights, Embassy Buenos Aires noted the following positive developments:

--A dramatic decline in the absolute number of disappearances:

As of December 28, Embassy records revealed 44 disappearances for the year, compared with well over 600 for 1978. There is evidence that security units continue to be disbanded, and officials assure the Embassy that orders are being enforced to prevent disappearances. The Embassy believes that security officials can still obtain authorization for the illegal abduction, torture, and subsequent execution of targets known to be terrorist activists. Nonetheless, some prisoners with terrorist connections who would have disappeared in past years are being legally processed.

--Continued gradual diminution of the number of executive (PEN) prisoners: Despite the absence since August of official figures, the Embassy believes its estimate of 2100-2300 prisoners is "fairly reliable." That figure includes those not charged, those charged and being tried, and those serving sentences after conviction. It compares with an Embassy figure of 3500-3600 for a year ago.

<--Improved prison conditions: Most Embassy sources confirm improved physical conditions for detainees, although [] related to the Embassy concern over the lack of recreation, arbitrary discipline imposed by local prison authorities, and occasional harsh treatment by individual guards.

On the negative side, the Embassy reports:

--No official effort to provide a public accounting for those who allegedly disappeared, nor any attempt to inform families privately.

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(--A perceptible slowdown in the right of option program in recent months: Whereas 34 US cases were approved between July and December 1978, in 1979 23 were approved from June to September, and only 6 have been approved since. (CONFIDENTIAL, Buenos Aires 1043)

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